DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 072 326 AC 014 162

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TITLE	The Church in Community Development.
PUB DATE	2 Feb 71
NOTE	9p.; Paper presented at Lay-Clergy Seminar, North Dakota State Univ., February 2, 1971
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Church Role; *Community Development; *Human Relations; *Social Action
IDENTIFIERS	South Dakota

ABSTRACT

The church's role in community development in a multicounty area which centers around Sioux Falls, South Dakota, is discussed. Three factors identified as being necessary if community development is to take place are: (1) education, (2) horizontal communication, and (3) a motivational force. The role of the church is seen to be that of a motivational force. The theological ingredients of the congregation being a motivational force are: Judgement and Grace of God; Forgiveness of Sin, a Social Force; Responsibility of Public Sector; and Prayer. Worship is believed to be very basic in community development. (DB)

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Presented at
Lay-Clergy Seminar
North Dakota State Univ.
2/2/71

THE CHURCH IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

by
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Community Development is the dynamics of planned change applied to the social systems of society. Its purpose is to improve the human condition and achieve quality of life for all citizens. This calls for a type of citizen's involvement that will result in improving the quality of human relationships and the performance of the social systems. To be successful in doing this community development must begin with a viable planning unit. A viable planning unit brings together people and resources so it can maintain an adequate range of services and choices.

Social Situations

I will approach my assignment from the standpoint of the church's role in a defined area in which a particular type of community development needs to take place. The area centers around Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Brookings is on the north edge; Vermillion and Yankton are on the south edge; Mitchell is on the west edge; and Worthington, Minnesota, is on the east edge. Roughly it is a circle with a 60-mile radius. I-90 crosses this area from east to west and I-29 from north to south. The two highways intersect at Sioux Falls. The area covers more than 10 thousand square miles. There are about 213 living places of varying sizes with a total population of over 300,000. The breakdown is:

1 = over 70,000 population	11 = over 2,000 population
5 = over 9,000 population	12 = over 1,000 population
2 = over 5,000 population	182 = less than 1,000 population

We refer to this area as a symbiotic community. This is an area in which a particular type of community development has to take place.

A. Our Assignment -- Our assignment is, "How does the church relate to community development in this area?" It concerns the 700 congregations and the 500 pastors who minister in this area. It is an area community. It can be thought of as a scattered city. We prefer the term, symbiotic community.

Symbiotic is a biological term and means the interrelatedness of unlike organisms for mutual benefit. As an example, a forest is a symbiotic community. It has trees, bushes, wildlife, birds, and other forms of life that are interrelated and support each other. A nonsymbiotic community is a wheat field. It has like organisms and is more vulnerable to attack. A symbiotic community is a stronger community. It is less vulnerable to attack from the outside. It can fight back.

We are applying this concept to the human community. We are making the assumption that unlike communities, working together for mutual benefit, make for a stronger social fabric than like communities working together. There is a place for little towns, a place for the larger towns, and a place for the center city. Towns and cities need not engage in a death struggle. Symbiotic relation is the formula that communities unlike in size and function can use to equitably work together for mutual interests.

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B. A New Settlement Pattern -- Let us look at it from another standpoint. When this area was settled the average rate of travel was 4 miles an hour. The farmer was willing to spend an hour to take his produce to town and an hour to get back home; consequently, towns developed every 8 miles. In 1900 a 60-minute community had a radius of 4 miles. Today the 60-minute community has a radius of 60 miles. In 1900 each of the 213 living places in our area was a 60-minute community. Today the area is one 60-minute community.

A new land settlement pattern is emerging. The old settlement pattern was influenced by small land units, slow-moving vehicles, poor roads, small scale, the one-bottom plow, and many small structures. Today the things that are influencing the emerging land settlement pattern are large units, fast-moving vehicles, improved highways, large scale, the 7-bottom plow, and fewer but larger structures.

C. Meet Needs -- The big task facing us is to deal with obsolete structures. We must find ways to remove obsolete structures, adjust old ones, or develop new ones. In each case the assignment is the same. How can we organize our resources to best meet the needs of people?

In every land settlement pattern people developed a set of social systems, such as a political system, an economic system, an educational system, a communication system, a health system, and a religious system. It is conceivable that the social systems which were designed to meet the needs of people who traveled 4 miles an hour will not adequately meet the needs of people who travel 60 miles an hour. By and large the political system that we operate with in the countryside was designed for the 4-mile-an hour travel.

D. New Image -- We are not thinking in terms of a crowded mass community. The 7-bottom plow made the one-bottom plow obsolete, but the 7-bottom plow did not make the 14-inch lathe and moldboard obsolete. Basically a 7-bottom plow is 7 one-bottom plows hooked in tandem, with enough power to pull it.

This is a model of an area community. It is the type of image we want to project--a symbiotic community of places and people. A catalyst needs to urge towns to work together in the interest of the common good. A small town has a future to the degree to which it can align itself with other towns. This calls for a coalition of towns to meet the needs. The function of places will change. Towns that have no future as trade centers may have a future as living places.

Farmers and ranchers have identified eight different types of soil. They have established the principle that each piece of ground is to be treated according to its need and to be used according to its capabilities. People need to think in terms of different types of towns, with different functions and capabilities.

I have described the situation in the Sioux Falls area. The Fargo-Moorhead area is similar. Both are multicounty planning units. The multicounty planning unit is being used more and more to improve the quality of human services.

Three Basic Factors

Before I discuss the Church's Role in Community Development in a multicounty area I want to identify three factors that are necessary if community development is to take place: 1) education; 2) horizontal communication; 3) a motivational force.

A. Major Input of Education -- If community development is going to take place in an area community, there will need to be a major input of education so that people in the area understand what is happening and why. Citizens can do effective planning if they will develop their coping strength so they can creatively deal with their social and natural environment. Citizens know something is happening; they know changes are taking place but they have difficulty identifying the precise issues and the forces that are at work. They do not realize that the changes they are experiencing are the result of choices they have made.

We need a major input of education so people understand their social environment and do effective local and area planning. The citizen spends his consumer dollar in a convenient shopping place, a partial shopping place, a complete shopping place, or a wholesale-retail shopping place. The citizen resides in a place but lives in the whole area. He resides in a place but needs the resources of the area to adequately meet his needs.

The people in the Sioux Falls area have good medical facilities but these medical facilities cannot be maintained by the citizens in Sioux Falls. They need the support of citizens in the area. To improve on the medical services and to develop a comprehensive health delivery system for all citizens calls for an educational program. Such a program should give people the capacity to design a comprehensive health delivery system for the area.

B. Horizontal Communication -- We need to develop horizontal communication and vertical communication. America is basically organized vertically. The line of communication runs from the small town to the larger city to the state capitol to the federal government. The same thing is true in the church. The line of communication is from the congregation to the circuit, conference, district, to the synod, to the church body.

The lines of communication go up and down. We need to have horizontal communication. When you turn on your radio in the morning you hear what happened in Chicago before you learn what happened in your neighboring town 25 miles away. Vertical communication is from county to state to federal, or from town to city to state to federal. Horizontal communication is from country people to town people, from town to town, from county to county.

Vertical communication moves people in the direction of centralized controls. It encourages centralized programs and develops centralized power structures. Horizontal communication makes people aware of their interdependence and moves people in the direction of local and area control. It encourages local initiative and develops leadership that is responsive to the needs of people.

C. A Motivational Force -- A motivational force is needed. You are interested in community development because you want to improve the human condition. You want all the needs of people to be adequately met. To improve the human condition in an area you

need to find a way to improve the performance of the social system. In a sense community development is a byproduct of the efforts put forth to improve the performance of the social system.

For example, if there is poverty in an area it is not because the area lacks resources. If there is poverty in an area it may be because the economic system isn't functioning adequately. Certain people do not have an opportunity to participate in the economic life. The reason for poverty may be that the educational system isn't functioning adequately. Certain people are not being adequately prepared to participate in community life or the religious system isn't functioning adequately. Certain people aren't being motivated to take advantage of the opportunities present.

If we want to improve the quality of life and achieve community development, we need to find a way to improve the performance of some or of all the social systems.

Role of the Church

What is the role of the church in improving the performance of the social systems? I do not see the church as a center of nervous activities. But I see the congregation as a motivational force that moves its members into the citizens' community.

A. Support Citizen Efforts -- Pastors of all denominations have emphasized the importance of soil and water conservation. They have motivated farmers to be good stewards of the land and water resources. But as far as I know we have never organized a Lutheran soil district, or a Methodist soil district, or a Catholic soil district. We assume that the persons motivated to be better stewards of land and water resources will implement this concern through a community structure, the conservation district. This moves society in the direction of wholeness.

We have done the same in the area of health. There was a time when the church was the institution that built most of the hospitals. We discovered a need for health facilities in rural areas. But a single denomination lacked the necessary funds. Then came the Hills-Burton Act and the government made funds available. Then the cry went up that the government is getting into church business. Wise counsel prevailed. They said, "No, let the community have the chores of providing the facility and of maintaining it; let the church minister to people who are ill."

The church should not be above getting involved if there is no community structure that can handle the assignment. Generally, it is better for the church to be the motivational force that urges its members to support citizens' efforts and a citizens' structure designed to improve community development.

Usually there is no lack of groups that are concerned with community development. It is more a matter of getting support behind community organizations that are concerned with community development.

When the church functions as a motivational force to achieve community development through community structures, it moves its members into action units that are designed: to achieve justice for all, to demonstrate

compassion, to improve the performance of the social system, or to help all people find fulfillment.

B. Strong Must Help the Weak -- It is not true that all people are equal. All people have equal worth, but all people do not have equal abilities. The strong must help the weak. A basic role of the church is to call for community development and urge its members to support citizen's efforts that are designed to improve the educational system, the health system, the political system, and the religious system, so that the strong and the weak are equally benefited.

Let me illustrate: The South Dakota State Legislature is now in session. One of the big issues coming up for action is a 10% cut in the amount welfare recipients are receiving. This is a time when the motivational power of the church is needed. Citizens need to be motivated to speak up for the needy who are largely voiceless and powerless. Concerned citizens will demand that the state act responsibly, that it identify the real problem and not pass the problem on to the helpless.

Theological Ingredients

What are the theological ingredients of community development? The theological ingredients of the congregation being a motivational force are:

A. Judgment and Grace of God -- All of life moves under the judgment and the grace of God. This is not man's world; this is God's world.

Changes are the result of the choices that people have made. When you move from a one-bottom plow to a 7-bottom plow you bring about social changes that affect the family, the school, the church. Man is accountable to God for the choices he makes. We work with the assumption that man is responsible for what he does, that his acts are judged by God, and that this means more than a moralistic evaluation with a general responsibility for the well-being of society.

"The universal human that unites us with all mankind serves merely as a smoke screen behind which people can hide and keep from acting responsibly for their real neighbor.

"Jesus took another position. He emphasized that we must act responsibly in word and deed. The neighbor is always an individual for whom I am personally responsible and who conversely is responsible for me. The categories of good and evil presuppose a sense of obligation which is meaningful only if man lives in relationship to a God who cannot be impressed by beauty, economic laws, mechanical necessity, or claims of social superiority."

We tend to take earthly entities such as economics, individualism, or community development, and give them the rank of deities. These are good earthly entities and no more. They cannot function as gods.

B. Forgiveness of Sin, A Social Force -- The church has been given the assignment by her Lord to declare God's forgiveness to men who are repentant. Before people can be repentant they must know the sins of which they are guilty. We talk

about sin in general terms. We catalog certain sins and concentrate on them. The Pharisees in Jesus' time did this. This approach draws our attention away from the social sins of which we are guilty. It is very difficult to get people to recognize that we share in the guilt of the social evils of our society, but it must be done. Our involvement in social sins must be made personal.

The moment a person is moved to confess that the exploitation of the soil is a sin as much as adultery is a sin that needs to be confessed, a sin for which people need forgiveness to have peace with God, the church becomes a motivational force. When a dairyman is brought to the realization that selling unclean milk is a sin, which angers God, at that moment the church becomes a motivational force.

God is as displeased with the tension and bickering between communities as He is displeased with tension and bickering within a family. He is also displeased when people who have the benefit of our affluent society find so little joy and meaning in life. Often when people fail to find joy and zest in living it is due to the sin of self-centeredness.

C. Responsibility of Public Sector -- The church will find it difficult to be a motivational force in a society in which many of the citizens are not knowledgeable in the area of social and human affairs. The church has been accused of not being relevant and maybe the accusation is correct, but it is unfair. It is unfair because most of our citizens do not know what the social issues are and how they themselves are involved.

How can a pastor make the Gospel relevant to the issues that people do not understand? How can a pastor make the Gospel relevant to the tax issue or the plight of the American Indian if citizens do not know the issues?

What we need is a citizenry that is knowledgeable concerning the deep social issues which people face. This is not the responsibility of the church. This is the responsibility of the public domain. It is the responsibility of the public domain to provide the necessary educational input so citizens are knowledgeable in the area of public and human affairs. Citizens must understand the tax situation before they can make a judgment as to an equitable taxing system. The pastor who has a membership that is not knowledgeable is compelled to educate through his sermons and is then often accused of lecturing on social issues. Church people should bring pressure to bear on the public sector to provide citizens with the opportunity of becoming informed in the area of social and human affairs.

D. Prayer -- Prayer is a motivational force. I don't know your prayer books but I have studied the prayer books of our church. We have the red hymnal in the Lutheran Church and there are 127 different prayers. They are designed to help people to pray for many things, such as a just society, peace, the worker, the farmer, equitable human relationships, etc. If we pray for these things and then don't work for them we are hypocritical. We could hardly say that the farmer who prays, "Give us this day our daily bread," and then does not plant and cultivate his crops is sincere.

The church can be a motivational force if we accept that all of life moves under the judgment and grace of God, that forgiveness of sin is a social force, and that people need to be honest and sincere in their prayer life.

Worship

One area in which pastors have special education is in the area of leading people in the worship of the Triune God. Worship is very basic in community development.

A. Confrontation and Response -- Worship has two aspects. It is a matter of confronting people with: Who God is; What God has done; and What God desires. It is also a matter of responding to this confrontation. The response is three dimensional: 1) Our relationship to God; 2) Our relationship to man; and 3) Our relationship to the environment.

A response in word and song that stops short of action to improve the quality of any one of the three dimensions is play worship. Meaningful worship of God as the Creator implies that people are accepting that God is concerned with community development. It is a public declaration that community development is as much a part of the church's mission as evangelism.

In most denominations community development has the status of being second class. It is something we do when we have everything else done. It is wrong to keep community development in this status. The church will not make a significant contribution in the area of community development if we continue to define God's concern too narrowly. God is concerned with developing better relations between men. This is community development. It means, to improve the performance of our social systems so all people have an adequate range of human services and choices.

If I believe in a God of justice and confess my faith in a God of justice, how can I as a citizen tolerate a tax system that I know is not just? Either I am not honest or I don't believe in a God of justice. If I believe in a God of mercy, how can I tolerate a welfare system that isn't compassionate? If I believe in a God who has created an orderly world, how can I tolerate a situation in which men are destroying the orderliness of God's earth?

B. Grace and Social Systems -- These basic truths which center around divine love, mercy, and justice, that the church proclaims, need to be related to the emerging land settlement pattern which I outlined in the beginning. Leaders in the church, in a concrete way, need to relate these basic truths to the social systems of society. This is not a simple task. It is a very difficult task to keep the church up-to-date on what is happening.

The givenness of God's grace doesn't change. God's message to man is the same from age to age, but God's creation is in process. We need to relate God's message, the concept of justice, mercy, and love to a social situation that is new each morning. We need to encourage people to come up with economic justice for people who live in a community in which some have access

to adequate capital--have a 7 bottom plow--and others do not. It is foolish to relate the concept of economic justice to a situation in which people had one-bottom plows. This situation does not now exist.

We are in the age of technology and citizens have to come up with answers so that they achieve economic justice in this age of technology.

C. Action Units -- On the basis of God's Word people need to be confronted with the truth that people who have faith in God "to them gave he power to become the Sons of God." But even they who have the power of Sons of God need units of response or action units through which they can become a motivational force. These units of response already exist. They may be the soil district, the water-shed program, the town council, or the board of supervisors. All of these units need the intelligent support of citizens.

D. Old Structures with New Functions -- As we study the political system of an area and discover that we still have township governments our first reaction is that this is an antiquated structure. The structure may be usable but the function may be antiquated.

A county in South Dakota, with which we're working, has about 12,000 people. It has 45 township supervisors. The present function of the supervisors may be antiquated, but perhaps we can make them responsible for pollution. We can give them the task of being concerned about the beautification of their township. They can become key persons in developing an adult education program which will help people to become knowledgeable in the area of public and human affairs.

The structure need not be destroyed. The function needs to be updated. If the old structures are given new functions, you have, in the above case, 45 elected people ready for action.

In the past when the church thought of action, it tended to develop its own units of response. In this way we organize laymen in competition with themselves. They are already involved in many units of response or action. The congregation needs to identify the units of action that laymen can use to achieve community development.

Conclusion

I will repeat briefly what I have said.

A. Area Community -- An area community is emerging. In some cases it is already here. It has some of the characteristics of a scattered city. What is new is the interrelatedness of people and places. People are a part of it. It is not being artificially created. It is being discovered on the basis of the behavior pattern of people. In this area community we have social systems that were designed for a situation that no longer exists. Citizens need to redesign or to adjust their social systems to increase their performance. Sometimes they need to remove obsolete structure in order that community development can take place.

B. Three Factors -- We identified three factors necessary for community development.

1) There needs to be a major input of education so people understand their environment and can cope with it. This is the role of the public domain.

2) There needs to be horizontal communication so that people recognize that they are a part of one web of human activity. This does not mean phasing out little towns; quite the opposite. It does not mean concentrating the population in a limited area; quite the opposite. It means a dispersed population aware of its interrelatedness.

3) There needs to be a motivational force so people are moved to action.

C. The 85% Who Are Not Poor -- The reason things aren't happening is not because we don't have the resources. When we talk about poverty we tend to focus on the 15% who are poor. This is not the problem of the church. Our problem is to motivate the 85% who are not poor. People have within their hands the capacity to bring about change so that the needs of the poor are met.

I repeat--I see the role of the church in community development as a motivational force.

We need to keep the design of the church simple. The grapevine can serve us as a model, if we think of Christ as the vine and church programs as the branches which bear the fruit. Each year the gardener prunes back the branches. The guidelines that the gardener follows are:

1) Look at the whole structure of the vine and identify its original design.

2) Cut back the branches by cutting between the 3rd and 4th buds. Cutting further back hurts the vine but correct pruning relieves the vine of unnecessary burden.

3) Cut with a very sharp knife so not to bruise the vine.

4) Seek to maintain the original design. Pruning the vine back to its original design has implication for the church.

Alfred Marshall said that there are two great motivational forces that have moved history. These have been the economic forces and the religious forces.

Too often religious forces have been negative. The church's task in community development is to have economic forces and religious forces move in concert. Both need to function under the judgment and the grace of God

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